



Connecticut Association for the
Education of Young Children

Testimony of David Kulick on SB 111

AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

Good afternoon Members of the Appropriations committee and thank you for this opportunity to testify on SB 111. My name is David Kulick and I live in Mystic, CT. I am the Past Co-president of the Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children (CTAEYC) and a member of the CTAEYC Public Policy Committee. On behalf of our nearly 1100 early childhood education and care professionals across the state that make up our membership, we would like to thank you for this opportunity to testify today as we support SB 111 with the following provisions.

The child care sector is in crisis. We need workers now. Some child care businesses have closed, but many more have closed classrooms because they can't find staff. This puts them in danger of closing in the next few months.

The ENTIRE system needs equitable support across all settings. There is no room to raise tuition for parents that can't afford early care and education now.

This means we need on-going, substantial wage supplements and benefits for small private centers, nonprofit centers (including religious programs) and family child care providers.

Plus, the state funded and school readiness programs, which have not had a meaningful increase since 2015, need to have reimbursement rates generously adjusted so that they are able to continue to provide high quality care and education.

The crisis in childcare is real and an increase in funding to the OEC is necessary. CTAEYC members represent the wide variety of child care settings across the state, including Non-profit, For Profit, Head Start, School Readiness, Family Child Care, among others. Since the beginning of this pandemic, so many programs have shared their experiences and stories, showcasing their struggles to survive in the most challenging of situations. They've shared on weekly Early Childhood Alliance-led Zoom Meetings, many of which have been attended by our state Legislators as



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well as our representation in DC. They've shared with media outlets telling their stories all over the state. Child Care providers throughout the state are working on shoestring budgets to try and deliver quality care for our children. At the same time, these programs are supporting and strengthening our workforce by enabling parents to work knowing that their children are receiving quality care they can trust. These programs and the early childhood industry is on the verge of collapse.

The implications of this collapse would mean:

- Families unable to go to work due to lack of childcare
- Teachers out of work
- 3600 licensed childcare businesses-small business owners in CT, are at risk of closure
- And most importantly, the 35,000 children in CT ages 0-5 will miss out on a quality early learning experience putting them at greater risk for needing costly interventions later in life.

We need a significant investment of \$700 million dollars towards an early childhood system in which:

- Preschool offered in a variety of settings is free
- Childcare is affordable for all families
- Early educators earn wages comparable to public school staff
- All childcare providers are funded based on the true cost of quality care.

The time for change is now and I ask you to invest in CT's future by fixing the childcare crisis we are facing. CTAEYC stands ready to support your work and welcomes the opportunity to speak with you further about the complex nature of CT's childcare system.